1: Child M-S (1924-1940) 1940 FP 13 Mbundu FP 13

responsible for the children, especially during their early years, but they are frequently sent 'to the *olusia*', i.e. to the mother's brother for at least a part of their education. Herein has arisen a conflict between the claims of the paternal household and the maternal kinship group. Economic and other forces seem to have favoured the former so that 'During these days in which we stand, things have changed somewhat so that as between children and their parents, they work for their fathers for they say, "A child is strong with his *olusi* and less so with his *olusia*." Nowadays a man teaches a child work and also looks out for his education that he may advance properly. His mother's brothers (*va inawa*) have no longer much power as of old.'[1]

Bearing in mind their bilateral nature and the fact that every Ocimbundu belongs at the same time to his paternal (*olusi*) and to his maternal (*olusia*) groups, the functions of these kinship groups may be summarized as follows:

Olusi	*Olusia*
SOCIAL	
Consists of local residence units; succession of village and tribal offices from father to son, or elder to younger brother.	Extended family organization; office of family head descends from mother's brother to sister's son; children belong.
Marriage allowed between cross-cousins and other relatives of non-parallel descent; couple lives at groom's father's village.	*Marriage preferred* between cross-cousins and other relatives of non-parallel descent; children belong to mother's *olusia*.
EDUCATIONAL	
Responsibility for education of young children, especially in social usage.	Responsibility sometimes assumed in later childhood, especially for technical phases.
ECONOMIC	
Ownership and inheritance of land. (Passed from father to son or elder to younger brother.)	Ownership and inheritance of more largely negotiable and movable property, as e.g. trade goods, cattle, &c. (passed from mother's brother to sister's son).

[1] Raul Kavita Evumbi, *op. cit.*

there was a great metal industry in Viye, where hoes were made for trade with the interior; later the wholesale manufacture of hoes was taken over by Ndulo, where there are the best and most easily accessible deposits of iron. In exchange for hoes they received palm-oil or cattle from other regions, or salt, rum, or goods from the coast. Other regional specialisations were :- Bunzgi and the Sele country for palm-oil, Cibuma for beeswax, cattle from Kalangi, Kalombo, and, further south, corn-meal from Civaka, Civula and Bailundu.(1)

438 [516]

SOCIAL ORGANISATION AND POLITICAL STRUCTURE

KINSHIP AND DESCENT

611 ● 114

The Ovimbundu appear to have a system of double descent which has not yet been fully reported and analysed, and whose nature is not very clear from existing accounts. The following outline is based on information given by Childe,(2) who unfortunately details the functions but not the composition of the kin groups concerned. In a review(3) of Childe' book, Barnes has formulated a descent system which would be congruent with Childe' description, and his suggestions are outlined here.

The epota

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Childe translates epota as "blood relatives", and his use of the term suggests that it may have either a general or a limited sense. Thus he writes (p.42): "Nearly all of the villagers belong to the same epota or extended family, which includes both lines of descent. Most of them belong to the father's family *(olusa)*, and the mother's family *(olusa)* may also be represented." And, in another context, (p.44): "When an Ovimbundu speaks of his epota (family) in the sense of a large and widespread organisation with a recognised head....it is generally his *olusa* [mother's family] to which he refers."

The olusa and the olusa

611 613

Every Ovimbundu belongs in the first instance to two distinct kin groupings: the *olusa*, to whom he is related through his father, and the olusa to whom he is related through his mother. Uterine brothers and sisters belong to the same *olusa* and olusa, but to the male and female side respectively, according to sex. (see below.) A difficulty has arisen because both Hambly(4) and Childe appear to regard both groups as bilateral. Hambly states explicitly that the *olusa*, or epota *lia tate* (family of my father) includes *all* relatives on the father's side, and the olusa or epota *lia nai* (family of my mother) *all* relatives on the mother's side. Childe writes (p.45) "Bearing in mind *their bilateral nature* ..... the functions of [the *olusa* and the olusa] may be summarised...". But from his summary it is obvious that the *olusa* and the olusa cannot be bilateral groups, neither can they have parallel descent systems of any kind. Marriage is patrilocal, and the *olusa* forms a local unit while the olusa is [591]

(1) Childe, 1949, p.37.
(2) Man, September 1950, p.127.
(3) 1949, pp.43-6.
(4) Op.cit., pp.193-2.

611 dispersed. Both groups have ritual leaders, whose offices are quite dis-
613 tinct. Barnes' suggestion[1] is that the two groups must be father's patrilineage and mother's matrilineage, with the qualification mentioned below.

613 The *olusa* consists of a large number of village groups, some of which
622 recognise mutual relationship,[2] but with no recognised head (other than the village headmen) except in the case of the royal families. Land is
[428] owned by the *olusa* and passed on within it from father to son, or from elder to younger brother. Succession to village or tribal office, from village headman to king, descends in the same way.[3] Ritual leadership within the *olusa* lies with the village headman, who is in charge of the
[346] spirit-hut *(etumbo)* of the guardian spirit of the village (or of the nuclear *olusa* within the village), and who officiates at regular village worship, including agricultural festivals.

613 The *olulua*, on the other hand, is a dispersed and apparently larger
428 group, whose members live with their various paternal lines of descent. The size of the *olulua* is unknown; Childs merely refers to it as a "large
604 and widespread organization, with a recognised head". The office of head of the *olulua (ukulu wepata)* descends from mother's brother to sister's son. Negotiable and moveable property, including cattle and trade goods, is owned by the *olulua* and inherited by the sister's son. Formerly the mother's elder brother had great powers over his sister's sons, and was even able to pawn them or sell them into slavery, to meet his own debts.
[592] The patrilocal household is usually responsible for training children, especially during their early years, but they are frequently sent to the
[582] *olulua* (i.e. to the mother's brother) for at least a part of their education. At death or divorce of parents, children go to the *olulua*.

43 The head *(ukulu wepata)* of the *olulua* is usually both the legal and
782 spiritual head of the group, although today the two functions are often divided. He is in charge of the spirit hut *(etumbo)* of the guardian spirit of the *olulua* (of whom there may be more than one, and of whom he becomes one after death). He leads the *olulua* in propitiatory rituals carried out in case of illness, death, or other misfortunes within the group, or in prayers made for desired economic advantages. (Apparently no regular rituals are carried out by the *olulua*.) The *ukulu wepata* may or may not be at the same time a village headman; if he is, he will be priest of two lines and have charge of two spirit huts; if he is not, there may be two (or more) priests in the village, each in charge of the spirit-hut of his *olusa* or *olulua*.

The ondji yokunji and the ondji yokumbo

613 The *olusa* and the *olulua* are both divided into male and female
602 "sides": the *ondji yokunji* (the side of the bow) and the *ondji yokumbo* (the side of the basket). It has been noted above that uterine brothers
582 and sisters belong to the same *olusa* and *olulua*, but to the male or female side in each, according to sex. The composition of these "sides" is

(1) *Loc.cit.*
(2) If some villages within the *olusa* cannot trace mutual relationship, the *olusa* should perhaps be called a *petri-clan* rather than a *patrilineage*.
(3) But see below, p.29.

however not at all clear. They seem to group simply all the male members and all the female members of the *olusε* and of the *olunu*; but this conflicts with the information given on marriage.(1) A man may marry into the male side of his mother's kin or into the female side of his father's kin. Hence there must be some women in the male side, and, presumably, some men in the female side. A man cannot marry a parallel cousin, but he may marry:

(a) a father's sister. She presumably belongs to the female side of the *olusε*, which presents no difficulty.

(b) a sister's daughter. She appears to belong to the female side of ego's mother's kin, while a man should marry into the male side of his mother's kin.

(c) a female cross-cousin. If the *olusε* and the *olunu* were merely father's patrilineage and mother's matrilineage, as has been suggested, cross-cousins are excluded from both groups. In a footnote,(2) however, Childs seems to imply that mother's brother's daughter belongs to ego's mother's kin. Barnes therefore suggests that children of men of the matrilineage may be included in the *olunu*, falling into the male side irrespective of sex, and similarly the *olusε* may include in the female side all the children of women of the patrilineage. By this hypothesis:

(a) a sister's daughter would fall into the female side of ego's *olusε*.

(b) a mother's brother's daughter would fall into the male side of ego's *olunu*.

(c) a father's sister's daughter would fall into the female side of the *olusε*.

The descent system: summary

The descent system suggested may then be summarised thus:

(1) *olusε* (father's kin)

(a) *andlε yakanji* (male side): all men in the patrilineage.

(b) *andlε yakambo* (female side): all women in the patrilineage, and all sons and daughters of women in the patrilineage.

(2) *olunu* (mother's kin)

(a) *andlε yakambo* (female side): all women in the matrilineage.

(b) *andlε yakanji* (male side): all men in matrilineage, and all sons and daughters of all men in the matrilineage.

According to this hypothesis every person belongs to four distinct groups. A man must belong not only to the male side of the two groups centred in the father's patrilineage and the mother's matrilineage, but also to the male side of his father's matrilineal group and to the female side of his mother's patrilineal group. There are still only two systems

(1) Childs, *op.cit.*, p.53. (2) P.53, fn.3.

611 of groups, but a man belongs to two groups within each system. Similar membership is required for a woman. A man shares with all his children 613 his membership of the male side of his mother's matrilineal group, and 602 shares with his sons membership of the male side of his father's patrilineal group. His daughters belong to his father's patrilineal group but to its female side. He does not transmit to his children membership of his father's matrilineal group or his mother's patrilineal group.(1) This is illustrated by the diagram on page 21.

601 *Kinship terminology*

Patterns of behaviour between all blood relatives find their prototypes in the household. The following list of kinship terms is selected from the more detailed list given by Childs.(2)

Term		*Reciprocal*
ssi	mother, mother's sister, etc.	*ssolonge*
tate	father, father's brother, etc.	*ssolonge*
tatekai	("female father") father's sister	*ocisanda congo*
mamu	mother's brother	*ocisanda congo*
hwonge	elder brother or sister, and male or female parallel cousin, if older than ego	*sanjonge*
kota	eldest brother (of family or household)	*sanjonge*
(epolume	male or female cross-cousin	*epolume*, *upolume*, or *cepwe*
(upolume		
(cepwe		
mukai	sister or female parallel cousin (W.S.)(3)	*mame*
mbuale	" " " " (M.S.)	*mbuale*
nsikulu	grandmother, grandparents' sister	*nsekulu yonge*
sekulu	grandfather, grandparents' brother	*nsekulu yonge*

Note: (a) There is no word used exclusively for "brother" by a man, although a woman may use *mame* in this sense. *Hwonge* and *sanjonge* are used by either men or women for older or younger brothers or sisters.

(b) *Nsikulu* and *sekulu* are sometimes used interchangeably for persons of either sex.

MARRIAGE

582 *Marriage within the kin group*

The most desirable marriage is marriage within the circle of kin, i.e. (as noted above) into the male line of the *oluna* or the female line of the *oluse*. (There appears to be a preference for marriage within the *oluna*.(4)) One may not marry one classed as brother, sister, father, mother, grandparent, child or grandchild, for such a union would involve

(1) This paragraph is largely quoted from Barnes, loc.cit.
(2) pp.47-9.
(3) M.S. = man speaking, W.S. = woman speaking.
(4) Childs, op.cit., p.18, note 3.

Crossing at the side the boy and girl cut and plant 27c

first pole, which is to be a part of the new etumbo (spirit hut). The boy and girl must take part ceremonially in each operation of building the hut, and when it is built they ignite the new fire. A hen and a cock are killed, cooked on the new fire, and eaten inside the etumbo by all who have taken part in building it. The headman and his wife must remain on the new site to keep the fire alight; other villagers may commute from the old village or erect temporary grass shelters on the new site. Houses are built by the occupants themselves, although men may give each other mutual help, for which there is a gift of food and beer. The onjango is usually built by the communal labour of all boys and men, and on its completion a simple ritual is performed to promote harmony within and to welcome the spirits, who are believed to sleep in the onjango and to take part in all discussions within it.(1)

776 346 361 342 344 [476] [782]

The village group: composition

Childs describes the relationship of the villagers of Ngundu to each other as typical of Umbundu country. Most of the heads of households are related agnatically to their respective section-heads (who are presumably also related agnatically to each other, since the village is based on the olusa group); Childs does not however discuss the relation of section heads to each other or to the village headman. He gives a table in which the householders are divided into six categories according to their relationship to their various section-heads:

621 611

1. Patrynal relatives of section head: Section A (headman's)
2. Matrynal relatives of section head: Section B
3. Natives' sons (or daughters)(2) Section B
4. Relatives by marriage Section A / B
5. Relationship not definitely known Section B
6. Former slaves Section A / B

621 601

(1) This section is based on Childs, 1949, pp.37-8.
(2) The child, of course, will have been included as matrynal relatives and patrynal relatives, since they belong both to the clans and to the olusa.

8: Hambly E-8 (1929-1930) 1934 FP13 Mbundu FP13

He draws the crescentic arrowhead (p. 123) still common among the Ovimbundu and Vachikue; the double iron gong (p. 122): and the musical bow, which he calls a viola (p. 121).

Sogaur states that iron-working had an advanced technique at Dindo, more than half a century ago. According to Sogaur, the blacksmith was using scrap iron from European sources (II, p. 14).

Perhaps the most valuable of Chatelain's books is "Fifty Folk Tales of Angola." The stories are accompanied by translations and ethnological notes, the most important of which are references to the carrying of a corpse on a pole; the building of a cairn of stones over the corpse of a hunter; matrilineal descent and the power of the maternal uncle over the persons of his nieces and nephews (sisters' children). My observations included some details respecting the pawning of a sister's children to redeem the debts of their mother's brother. Chatelain adds that sisters' children are successors to private property and chieftainship (pp. 8-10). My notes agree that property is inherited by children of a deceased man's sister, but my informants said that a new chieftain is normally the eldest son of the principal wife of the dead chief. Chatelain's folklore stories, fifty in number, relate chiefly to animals; this was the only kind of story told to me, but W. C. Bell has recorded a few tales of another type.

Marquardsen (1928) devotes only one-fourth of his book to the ethnology of Angola, which he treats in a very general way; there is no section dealing specifically with any particular tribe. The author calls attention to Chapman's observation of rock paintings of South African Bushman type, between Cuma and Luimbale in northwest Angola. I have elsewhere remarked on the occasional occurrence of physical types which show a strain of Bushman blood. Today Bushmen penetrate southern Angola from the Kalahari (Plate LXIX, Figs. 1, 2), but their presence in times past or present does not affect the course of history or the data of ethnology to an appreciable extent.

Marquardsen gives some notes of a general kind on Vabeneca, Mahuila and other tribes of southwest Angola. The suggestion is feasible that the Umbundu name Suku, for a supreme being, is the same as the Nzambi of Lunda and the Congo. Marquardsen refers to the importance of the maternal uncle in Umbundu society, to the poison ordeal, and to the burial of an Umbundu chief in oxhide, all of which points were recorded in my observations at Elende.

Ferreira Diniz's book is unobtainable, but, judging from the summary given in *Anthropos* (XX, 1925, pp. 321-331), the information was collected by a questionnaire widely distributed among adminis-

3: Hambly E-5 (1929-1930) 1934 FP13 Mbundu FP13

171 428 this method is characteristic of many pastoral tribes of south and east Africa.

171 611 The Ovimbundu are situated between two systems of reckoning descent, succession, and inheritance; namely, the Negro system of the Congo region, and that of the eastern and southern cattle-keeping people. In view of the culture contacts described in Chapter X, the mixed system of the Ovimbundu is intelligible.

On the one hand the Ovimbundu emphasize the rights of the mother's brother while denying inheritance to a wife and her children, but in royal families the eldest son of the principal wife succeeds to kingship. Among commoners descent is reckoned through both the father and the mother. Therefore the inference is that the [174] Ovimbundu have, by virtue of their position and contacts, made a blending of two distinct social systems, one of which gives succession to office in the male line, while the other gives inheritance in the female line. In their system of burial rites for kings the Ovimbundu follow the usages of the pastoral area.

171 608 Exchange of blood is an Umbundu custom resembling that which occurs widely in Negro Africa. This exchange of blood is the typical Negro form of the blood brotherhood. Another rite is the Hamitic custom of drinking a mixture of blood and milk; this the Ovimbundu do not practise.

171 291 The hoe-cultivation practised by Ovimbundu women is in agreement with Baumann's association of hoe-culture and matriarchal conditions, the latter being indicated by the importance of the mother's brother. These concomitant factors are shown by Baumann (II, p. 292) to be characteristic of a wide area in the Congo basin. To this area may be added the whole of central Angola.

171 567 The factors of slavery among the Ovimbundu are in agreement with all that is known of the treatment of slaves in the Congo area and farther west Africa. Slaves of the Ovimbundu taken in warfare were treated with less consideration than those who passed into slavery to redeem a debt. There was also discrimination in favor of slaves taken in local quarrels among the Ovimbundu themselves. The killing and eating of slaves in north Angola is a custom whose early occurrence has already been noted.

AFRICAN PUBERTY RITES

171 881 Initiation ceremonies for boys and girls are at present well preserved among the Vachokue of eastern Angola; for a period such ceremonies declined among the Ovimbundu, but there is now a

6:Edwards E-5 (1955-1956)1962
FP13 Mbundu FP13

CHAPTER VII

KINSHIP

1. *General Aspects*

A good deal has been said about the contemporary kinship system in Chapter IV, where it was discussed from the point of view of the local organization rather than in its own right. This chapter must, therefore, to some extent, refer to information already presented in Chapters I and IV, since there are three problems to be discussed—the form of the old kinship system, the form of the present kinship system, and the reasons for the changes from one system to the other.

The following approach will be adopted: the ethnographic sources for Umbundu kinship will be examined, information will then be given on the kinship norms formerly valid, and an attempt will then be made to give a coherent sketch of the system then existing. After this, reference will be made to the actual operation of present-day kinship norms and the significance of descent and inheritance. Then factors in the transition between the two systems will be brought forward.

It has been generally accepted by commentators on the ethnographic material that the traditional Umbundu kinship system is of the type called a 'double-descent' system.[1] 'Descent' is used by British anthropologists to imply membership of a group involving rights and duties.[2] Hence, it can only be claimed that the Ovimbundu possessed such a system if there existed two sets of kin groups, and not simply some combination of matrilineal inheritance and virilocal residence at marriage.

One anthropologist, Mr. W. D. Hambly, and two missionaries

[1] For other African double-descent systems see *African Systems of Kinship and Marriage*, ed. Radcliffe-Brown and Forde (Oxford, 1950), pp. 79, 183–210.

[2] The word seems to have been first used in this sense by W. H. R. Rivers.

6:Edwards E-5 (1955-1956)1962
FP13 Mbundu FP13

social unit. 'All descendants of the same great-great-grandmother speak of themselves as a group (matrilineally descended), by the term *Imolietu*, i.e. "children from a common source".'[9] Dr. Hastings did not apply the concept of double-descent to this society but regarded it as being matrilineal with patrilineal trimmings. After noting the patrilineal succession to the chiefdom, virilocal residence after marriage, and social preference for patrilineal kinsman, Dr. Hastings states: 'Apart from these apparent indications which might mislead one into concluding that the Ovimbundu are patronymic [*sic*], every other behaviour is obviously linked up as far as social attitudes and relations of the living are concerned within the matrilineal sib.'[10]

The neat tabulation by Dr. Childs[11] of the functions of the two kin groups, when considered in conjunction with the passages cited from Hastings, seems to provide quite clear proof that it is correct to apply the category 'double-descent kinship system' to that formerly prevailing among the Ovimbundu.

2. *Kinship Terms*

Tate *So* *Iso*	my father your father his father	Extended to all brothers, real or classificatory, of a father, all men married to a 'mother', and to the father's sister's son, particularly if he has been your father's heir.
Mai *Nyoko* *Ina*	my mother your mother his mother	Extended to all sisters, real or classificatory, of a mother, and to all wives of any 'father'.
Sekulu	mother's brother	Extended to any brother, real or classificatory, of a mother, and to the husband of any *apahai*.
Apahai[12] *Sohai*	my father's sister, his father's sister, your father's sister	Extended to any sister of any father and the wife of any *sekulu*.

[9] Ibid., p. 83. *Imolietu* actually means 'our womb'.
[10] Ibid., p. 87.
[11] Childs, pp. 43–48.
[12] *Tatakai* (father-woman), used in other parts of Umbundu country for 'my father's sister', is not found in Cuanhama.

6:Edwards E-5 (1955-1956)1962
FP13 Mbundu FP13

[1874-1911]

slave. Once ransomed a boy could not be sold again. If, however, the father was displeased with his son's behaviour he could refuse to ransom him. When a man died, his adolescent sons would go to the household of a classificatory father and the children who did not yet 'have sense' would go with the widow to her kin, returning to their agnatic kin when they were older.

4. *Analysis of the Old Kinship System*

The ethnography of the Ovimbundu does show that there existed a double-descent kinship system, each individual belonging to both a local patrilineal group, and a dispersed matrilineal group, in which movable property is inherited. So great has been the impact of social change that not only have these groups disappeared but it is practically impossible to gain additional information on them by direct questions about their nature and functions. The information on kinship norms does give a somewhat clearer picture.

Within the village there was a very strong emphasis on the unity and solidarity of the men of the village. The men's house was the main social centre of the village where the men ate, received guests, and listened to cases. It was about it rather than about the person of the headman that ritual clustered.[1] The elementary family was not the unit of domestic consumption, and it is clear, from the taboos regarding contact with women kin, and the evidence as to the social life of the man's house that there was little recreational contact between the sexes. The concept of *onjimbo*[2] shows that the elementary family of husband, wife, and children, was morally and ritually significant, but many of the educational, nutritive, and recreational functions frequently associated with it were here attached to the men's house.

The strength of the agnatic ties in this society seems to have lain in the solidarity of the men of the village rather than in the patriarchal authority of fathers over sons. A son was economically independent of his father since he could trade on his own while his father was still living; the most powerful social sanction in the hands of kinsmen, that of being sold as a slave, was

[1] For these rituals see Hastings, pp. 73–76, and Childs, p. 39.
[2] *Onjimbo* will be discussed more fully in the next chapter.